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President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.00 a.m.

Agenda item 33

Culture of Peace

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/377)

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (A/55/338)

The President: I should like to inform Members that, in a letter dated 21 September 2000 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of September, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the observer of the Holy See in the debate on agenda item 33.

Taking into account the importance attached to this issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear the observer of the Holy See in the debate on agenda item 33?

It was so decided.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Good morning to everybody. The General Assembly hall is very sparsely populated as we are about to start the debate on a culture of peace.

There was a time, and not so long ago, when every presentation I made on a culture of peace used to have a section entitled "what is a culture of peace?" We have come a long way since then in a relatively short period of time. Today, there is not only a common understanding of a culture of peace, but also an emerging global movement to carry forward its ideals and actions as identified in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

We commend the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/55/377 that brings together contributions from the United Nations system on a culture of peace and provides a useful basis for the implementation of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 53/243 of 13 September 1999, calls for a global movement for a culture of peace and defines the areas of action that should guide Governments, international organizations and civil society in promoting and strengthening a culture of peace.

The Declaration and Programme of Action provide all of us with a clear set of guidelines for action. It is a universal document in the real sense, transcending borders, cultures, beliefs and societies. It

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identifies actors who have a role in advancing a culture of peace. In addition to States and international organizations, such as the United Nations, it includes religious and community leaders, parents and families, teachers, artists, professors, journalists and students — people from all walks of life. The areas identified in the Programme of Action — namely, education, sustainable development, human rights, equality between women and men, democratic participation, advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity and international peace and security — have been priorities of the United Nations since its foundation.

As the report of the Secretary-General mentions, "what is new is their linkage through the culture of peace and non-violence into a single coherent concept". It also mentions that this is the first time that "all these areas are interlinked so that the sum of their complementarities and synergies can be developed".

The adoption of a Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace is, however, only the first step. Our success will rest on the strength of our partnership for its implementation. For the success of our movement, we have to build a grand alliance for a culture of peace. Civil society has a very important and definite role in that alliance. Without its proactive role, we can never involve communities and societies in the building of a global culture of peace.

During the ongoing International Year for the Culture of Peace, we have seen such a grand alliance come together. It is heartening to see the culture of peace receiving wider and wider global acceptance, through the efforts of the United Nations, and especially the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); through the national committees and national focal points developed during the year; through projects implemented globally, nationally and locally; through widespread involvement of civil society; through declaratory statements by regional organizations; and through symposiums, workshops and seminars held all over the world. We are witnessing the movement as it gathers a momentum that cannot be reversed.

We look forward to the next Decade for further consolidating a culture of peace. We have to take our movement to our streets where crime and homelessness is endemic; to our schools where children are learning the wrong lessons; to our communities where poverty is excruciating and harmony is only a hope; to our societies where discrimination and exclusion persist; but most importantly, to every human mind, to extinguish the evils of intolerance and prejudice, ignorance and selfishness.

Our work during the next Decade will be to place children at the centre of the movement for a culture of peace. By inculcating a culture of peace in future generations, we secure the future of peace. Bangladesh, as in previous years, will be tabling a draft resolution on this item. The draft will focus on ways and means of placing children at the centre of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, as proclaimed in resolution 53/25 of 10 November 1998. The draft resolution will be made available to all delegations, and we will be holding consultations for finalizing it subsequently. Therefore, we would request that the item be kept open after today's general debate for adoption of that draft resolution.

Let me provide the general thrust of the draft resolution that is being put together. First, the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace provides us with a clear set of actions that should form the basis of the activities during the Decade.

Secondly, the objective of the Decade would be, as the Secretary-General has mentioned, to place children at the centre of activities for a culture of peace and to further strengthen the global movement for a culture of peace. The objectives of the Decade could be further advanced through the strengthening of existing partnerships and networks and developing new ones as well as through the full use of new information technology.

Thirdly, during the Decade, UNESCO should continue to play its important coordinating role in the global movement for a culture of peace and should serve as the lead agency for the Decade. It should organize reviews and appraisals of the implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action during the Decade at mid-point in 2005 and at the end of the Decade in 2010.

Fourthly, other entities of the United Nations system should be closely involved and should engage their own networks of partners for the success of the Decade. In particular, the roles of the United Nations Children's Fund and the University for Peace would be of great significance, given the importance of education in the lives of children and young adults.

Fifthly, closer involvement of the various national committees and focal points, as well as of numerous civil-society actors, including the non-governmental organizations, lies at the heart of the success of the Decade and making it relevant at all levels.

Sixthly and finally, the Decade should have particular significance for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children and for the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in the same year in South Africa.

Mr. Bossière (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey join in this statement.

The European Union thanks the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, and the United Nations agencies that contributed to it.

For the European Union, a non-conflictual approach in international relations requires the firm will of all actors involved to promote tolerance and respect for others. As the Preamble to the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states:

> "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

An international society founded on a culture of peace must be built on tolerance, justice, human rights and democracy.

The European Union believes that education is the main instrument for disseminating and promoting these values. As the Secretary-General emphasizes in his report, tolerance, democracy and human rights must be the subjects of special attention in education and awareness-raising among all institutional actors, particularly the education sector.

The European Union believes that UNESCO, given its specific vocation in educational matters, has a leading role to play in this field. The Dakar World Education Forum on the theme of "education for all" assigned the international community the task of ensuring basic education for all, regardless of age or geographic or social background. It entrusted to UNESCO the 15-year mandate of coordinating initiatives to meet that objective.

The European Union considers that the values of tolerance, human rights and justice are essential components of basic education and indispensable elements of all effective development policy. The European Union calls on UNESCO rapidly to develop partnerships with organizations, the United Nations Children's Fund in particular, that will help it successfully to carry out this mission.

History has taught the countries of the European Union that tolerance and human rights are never acquired for all time, even in democratic societies. We are pleased that the United Nations, seeking to promote these values in the international community, has restored to the core of its activities one of the fundamental missions assigned to it by the Charter.

Mr. Ling (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Government of the Republic of Belarus attaches great importance to the agenda item on a culture of peace. As a State that has often suffered terribly from war and conflict through its history, we are vitally interested in developing and promoting all ideas on how to ensure a peaceful future for our planet. The culture of peace is certainly one of those noble ideas.

The current session carries particular significance for the debate on developing a culture of peace. At the Millennium Summit, the heads of State and Government of States Members of the United Nations confirmed their commitment to peace. The Millennium Declaration focused on the main areas of work to be undertaken by the world community to ensure the well-being and prosperity of the planet in the twenty-first century. We hope that the provisions of the Declaration will be implemented.

The culture of peace is organically interwoven into the very idea of United Nations activity to prevent conflict and war. Today, as we discuss measures to prevent the emergence of crises at the earliest possible stage, the establishment of a culture of dialogue and compromise becomes a vitally important task. Our discussion today is intended to provide the General Assembly with additional instruments for introducing

the ideals of peace more actively into the daily routines of the peoples of our countries. In this context, a huge role is played by the University for Peace, which Belarus supports and encourages.

Human losses in conflict are enormous and wounds to the global outlook and interrelationships of peoples heal more slowly than physical injuries. In this context, work to strengthen social values, opinions and ties reflecting common interests and transcending the disagreements that lead to conflict must be the subject of priority attention. Belarus is willing to participate in the work to develop the culture of peace and to integrate it as vigorously as possible into our social consciousness.

Mr. Aboulgheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly is discussing today one of its most important agenda items, one which reflects the purposes, the principles and the very being of the United Nations: the culture of peace. We, the peoples of the world, have undertaken to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, and we do this on the basis of the common moral values of our diverse civilizations. Leaving aside our cultural, linguistic or religious differences, we have undertaken to cooperate to fulfil the hopes of humanity to achieve development, peace and prosperity.

Unfortunately, the more humanity moves towards coexistence and peace the more we see conflicts and crises — religious, ethnic, tribal and regional. The world has also suffered from repeated economic crises and nuclear and environmental threats, and has been the victim of an irresponsible use of technology under the guise of scientific progress. It was therefore necessary to resume the dialogue to reinforce the culture of peace. This is why the General Assembly has declared the year 2000 the International Year for a Culture of Peace and has also sought to bring about a common cultural and scientific denominator so that we can all cooperate to safeguard the dignity, values, freedoms and specificities of the human race and respect our different cultures.

Just as our civilizations have produced tyrants, war-mongers and destructive forces, they have also produced great individuals, advocates of peace, scientists, inventors, explorers and great politicians who have set the basis for a culture of peace. Our world is determined to adopt a new path on the basis of common principles that are not separated by ideologies or intellectual, cultural or religious beliefs. So is the determination of people to cooperate whatever their culture, whatever their orientation. That can only make a direct contribution to setting up the concept of a culture of peace, which must play an essential role in guaranteeing cooperation, understanding and dialogue, far from aggression and any attempts to impose one's views, whether intellectual, economic, or military, or of any other kind.

In this respect, Egypt believes in the importance of the dissemination and strengthening of the culture of peace, through strengthening of international peace and security, comprehensive disarmament and everything which may solve problems and remove the obstacles to economic and social development, as well as the creation of a national and international climate to eradicate poverty, taking into account aspects such as trade, investment, technical assistance and technology transfer. We feel that it is essential to enhance social and economic cohesion and reinforce human rights and the dignity of the individual. We also have to pay attention to the empowerment of women and respect equality of opportunity for men and women, all on the basis of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which must remain the most appropriate and essential framework for defining a culture of peace, and on the basis of the principle of the sovereignty and independence of States and the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States.

What both surprises and concerns us is that whilst the countries of the world are appealing for, and stressing the need to reinforce, a culture of peace, thousands of innocent victims are affected by conflicts. Children particularly have become targets or tools of conflicts. Despite the shocking number of children killed, kidnapped or wounded, because of landmines and other weapons, the number of children deprived of affection and their mental and material needs in societies torn apart by conflicts is even greater. Millions of children have lost their homes, their families and years of study — they have lost their youth. Some have suffered from psychological shock, which will remain with them for the rest of their lives. We therefore reaffirm the importance of the resolution declaring the decade from 2001 to 2010 the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. The children are the future of the human race. They are the future of

our society. The development of children, safeguarding their lives and their rights, is a common responsibility incumbent upon us all. The children of the future will experience the effects of what we do today, either war and violence or development and peace.

When we speak of the culture of peace, we have to express our great concern and anger at the continued Israeli occupation of the Arab territories in Palestine and Syria, in violation of all the principles, laws, rules and norms laid down in the Charter of the United Nations and conventions relating to human rights, as well as in the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace for the Decade. Today, after more than half a century, we still support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. They are suffering and facing all forms of violence and repression and injustice whilst the Israeli forces continue to kill people, including children, ignoring all legal, political and moral undertakings in this respect. Whilst we speak of the culture of peace, we cannot ignore the just appeals of the Palestinian people for help. They live in inhumane, very difficult conditions that cry out to the world conscience.

The United Nations, the voice of the international community and the symbol of international legality, has played its role in the conflict between Arabs and Israelis, in times of both war and peace, actively participating in historical decisions adopted over the last decades relating to the Palestinian cause. It is high time the United Nations declared its commitment to implement the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, which calls for strengthening the dignity of the human being and for ending foreign occupation.

Egypt appeals for an end to the Israeli occupation of all the lands in question as part of a just, comprehensive peace on the basis of United Nations resolutions and the international legal order. Egypt also asks that the decisions and agreements that have been signed be implemented so that we can make progress in the peace process, with respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to create their own independent State, in the common interest of all the peoples living in the region in order to safeguard stability and strengthen the basis for justice, fairness and balance. We should implement these decisions in order also to safeguard the credibility of the international legal order and all the appeals made in order to strengthen human security and human rights. Egypt asks that all the Israeli elements that have violated international law and the principles of human rights be identified so that they can be brought to book for the injustices and the unjustified violence perpetrated against the Palestinian people.

Despite the challenges and tragedies that our world has to face, we are optimistic. We feel that we can work together to achieve our objectives and strengthen the culture of peace in this new millennium.

We want a better future for our children and our peoples, and we want to ensure that the rights of peoples and nations are respected without differences over priorities and definitions. We want to ensure that our political work is strengthened without double standards; we want real development that does not ignore poverty or its causes; we want clean environment, science and technology applied for the good of everyone and, finally, we require the respect of law, human rights, and the purposes and principles that we have adopted in the Charter.

We recognize that we will not be able to implement all these principles without a serious and constructive dialogue between civilizations — a dialogue based on equality and mutual respect. The United Nations as a forum that brings together diverse cultures and approaches has to play an essential role in order to reinforce understanding and cooperation. The Declaration and the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace are undoubtedly the clearest evidence of our commitment to work in this forum. The culture of peace is a set of values and a code of conduct based on the principles of freedom, justice, democracy development, respect for human rights, human security, safety of the individual, tolerance, solidarity, equity, legal order, non-intervention in domestic affairs, the prohibition of violence and occupation and respect for the sovereignty, plurality and the specificity of each society. All of this can lead us along the right path to reinforce a dialogue that aims at bringing about mutual understanding and coexistence.

Mrs. Mohanta (India): The eight areas of action identified by the General Assembly to promote the culture of peace, which the Secretary General recalls in his report, span so much of the work of the United Nations system that this one agenda item helps us check on the progress that we, as Member States, and the United Nations, as an institution, are making towards the promotion of our common objectives.

The first of these eight areas is a culture of peace through education. The Secretary-General has reported on the steps taken throughout the world to put this in practice. We need to take note of the dangerous exceptions. The unending strife in Afghanistan, the most protracted and vicious of the conflicts now bedevilling the world, is sustained by young men who as children were educated only in war and into a culture of intolerance, bigotry and hatred. Volumes have been written about the schools that exploit poverty to draw children into their fold with the temptation of two square meals a day, and train them to become cannon fodder in one war or another, falsely fomented and sustained in the name of religion. Their poison, first injected into Afghanistan, has now spread beyond its borders. We, and other neighbours of Afghanistan, have borne the brunt of this, and others are now becoming targets.

Sustainable economic and social development is the second area of action. As a first step, we hope the commitments of the Millennium Declaration will be implemented, as those agreed to at various world conferences over the last decade were not. In many regions, economic development has slowed down, or is not keeping pace with need. Globalization has put pressure on social development. Experience shows that both the unequal benefits from growth and the absence of growth can produce tensions that can lead to conflict, within nations and between them. A culture of peace cannot truly take hold as long as there is unequal or flagging economic and social development.

Respect for all human rights constitutes the third area of action. Here too, progress has been uneven. The promotion of a narrow and selective interpretation of human rights has become a political tool of the powerful. Whether this promotes human rights, or whether this is indeed the intention, is a moot point. What is obvious is that human rights have become an arena of conflict between nations; it would be simplistic to suggest that the friction is only between countries that promote human rights and those that violate them. The tension is between those that preach about human rights, and those who resent self-serving advice. To promote a culture of peace, we must collectively, and without any assumptions of cultural or moral superiority, work to promote the human rights of all, without drawing arbitrary distinctions between one set of rights and another; economic, social and cultural rights are as important as social and political rights in the promotion of a culture of peace.

Equality between women and men is the fourth area of action. The follow-up to the Beijing Conference earlier this year in the special session of the General Assembly showed us how far we still have to go. In fact, in many areas, there has been backsliding since Beijing, rather than progress. Important groups of countries seem to be reluctant to continue to honour commitments they accepted at Beijing; others are interested only in the promotion of an extremely shallow and provocative interpretation of women's rights. In the Security Council, two weeks ago, the discussion on women and peace and security was an interesting one, but it established just how marginal a role women continue to play in the promotion of peace.

Democratic participation is the fifth area, and this forms the foundation on which everything else rests. Over the last decade, democracy had become almost the norm of governance. We welcomed the emergence of the new and restored democracies. Unfortunately, over the last two years, several countries newly emerged into democracy have relapsed into a totalitarian system of governance. Where there is no democracy, where Governments are run by the military, it is unlikely that any of the other seven areas of action needed to promote a culture of peace will get any attention. Democracy needs to be defended, and we were pleased therefore that earlier this year a Community of Democracies was formed to do just that. The promotion of democracy and its spirit as a norm should be critical to the work of the United Nations, but the Organization is still far behind others such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Commonwealth, which, to their lasting credit, have decided to ostracize those who overthrow democracy. It is time that the United Nations seriously consider similar action.

Understanding, tolerance and solidarity make up the sixth area. Here, too, the record is uneven. The attempt to promote dialogue among civilizations is a useful initiative, but it must be truly comprehensive, not restricted either to a rigid or sectarian interpretation of civilization or to the promotion of any political objective other than to strengthen a sense of solidarity among all the citizens of the world and appreciation and respect for the contribution of the cultures. Experience has shown that even when this solidarity is most desperately needed, such as for instance, when

disasters strike, the international response is very skewed, and almost entirely determined by political considerations. What has been described poignantly as humanitarian favouritism does not promote the culture of peace.

On the free flow of information and knowledge, the seventh area of action, the Secretary-General has reported on the various ways in which information technology can be both used and abused. He has also reminded us of the important role the mass media must play. We endorse his comments. While the Secretary-General has concentrated on the flow of information, it is also at least equally important that there should be a free flow of knowledge. Knowledge, particularly scientific knowledge, is now in fact shared less freely than it was earlier. Since we live in an era defined by knowledge, those who are denied access to it will by definition fall further and further behind; if a permanent underclass is thereby created, global peace can never be established.

The last area is that of international peace and security. If democracy is the soil in which we plant a culture of peace, international peace and security is its fruit. But, though this might appear a tautology, there is much that can be done by the United Nations to promote a culture of peace in actions taken to promote peace and security. The most obvious, and certainly the most important, is nuclear disarmament. The first truly global peace movement arose to press for universal nuclear disarmament. As long as we live under the threat of nuclear annihilation, the international community can never be said to enjoy security. What is particularly worrisome and dispiriting is that some of the most powerful nuclear weapon States predicate their security on the first use of these weapons, even against those who are not nuclear-armed. This does not reflect a culture of peace, and continuously undermines international peace and security.

Peacekeeping is the instrument the United Nations has developed over the last fifty years to restore peace and security where it has been seriously breached. Increasingly, the United Nations believes that a peacekeeping operation will have lasting success only if it helps create and leaves behind a political framework that promotes democracy, human rights, gender equality and an environment that would help sustain economic and social development. These are all elements of a culture of peace. By definition, all this can be done only by peacekeeping forces that have an experience of this at home; it cannot be done by military and police contingents from countries where there is no democratic tradition or where the military has a practice of overthrowing democracy. For the United Nations to use such forces in its peacekeeping is to ensure that the objectives it wishes to promote will in fact be subverted. This is self-evident, but we are astonished that the United Nations does not act upon it.

This is a broad-brush assessment of where we are in the development of a culture of peace. Clearly, much remains to be accomplished, and we would hope that the Secretary-General, in his next reports, will cover developments in the work of the United Nations system in all eight areas of action needed to promote and nurture a culture of peace.

Mr. Pradham (Bhutan): It has been frequently stated that war and peace emanate from the minds of human beings. Therefore, to prevent warfare and violence it is necessary to change the thinking and attitude of people. This is best done through a culture of peace that should be inculcated, sustained and nurtured by each society at various levels of the social strata. It has to begin with individuals and families. It has to be ingrained in children in our homes and schools from a tender age. It has to be practised by Governments and promoted by civil society and religious leaders. The use of violence in finding solutions, if it is not just or is based on the strong preying on the weak, can never give rise to durable peace.

Despite what I have just mentioned, the international community is aware that today's world lacks the culture of peace and we still have some way to go and learn through hard lessons. Solutions, no matter how difficult, and the process, no matter how tedious, must be found through dialogue and peaceful means, and not through the barrels of guns. But when appeals for peaceful resolution of disputes do not have the desired effect on situations, and innocent people — women and children — start getting killed and injured, there is no other way but to use force to put an end to violent disputes, however painful this may be, however reluctant we may be to do so.

The international community has utilized force in certain circumstances and may have to do so in the future. But we must remember that such situations should be considered carefully, and should be used

only as a last resort when all other peaceful means have failed and situations have become untenable for innocent lives. Military action to tackle such circumstances should be taken with the broad consensus of the international community and by decision of the Security Council. Again, for the effective functioning of the Security Council there is a need for major reforms to reflect the realities of today's world. This is another matter, and the General Assembly will be dealing with it under a separate agenda item.

The General Assembly proclaimed the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace and the decade 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. These are laudable objectives. But we need to make these pronouncements meaningful. The trafficking of children from poor nations for prostitution and other illegal activities is a grave matter, and to deal with it, we have to go beyond the debates in these halls. Governments and civil society must initiate deliberate and stern action to put an end to these practices. As we have already seen, simply saying that laws exist to prevent such practices is not adequate. The misuse of children has its basis mainly in abject poverty conditions.

We can only see this situation worsening in the years to come with the expanding populations in the developing countries, unless Governments and the international community start acting in purposeful haste. Hence, it must be remembered that action must include the establishment of the necessary social and economic conditions that would help poor nations and societies to give children a meaningful education, health facilities and a future to look forward to. To do all this developing countries require resources, and especially official development assistance, which may be linked to promises of good and responsible governance on the part of the countries concerned.

Under the wise leadership of His Majesty the King, we have launched a socio-economic development policy in Bhutan that goes beyond gross national and gross domestic product statistics. Our development policy is people-centred, and we call it Achieving Gross National Happiness. Peaceful coexistence has been one of the pillars of Bhutan's foreign policy. Our national psyche has been nurtured by Buddhism, whose basis — as the world knows — is embedded in a culture of peace. But we are also conscious that we live in a complex world order in which nations seek to pursue their interests, not only through cooperation but also at the expense of others. It is in this context, and in the absence of built-in mechanisms designed to safeguard and promote the interests of small States, that we are required to take measures to safeguard our sovereignty, should the need arise.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the conditions of abject poverty afflicting three billion people, or half the world's population, along with rapidly expanding populations, has a lot to do with disturbing the peace. There can be no culture of peace in the midst of poverty and population explosions. There can be no culture of peace when countries and leaders advocate violence, hatred and terrorism. We must not allow our focus on these issues to be blurred by any other. We must look deeply into these problems that are plaguing societies, and consciously and deliberately promote the culture of peace by finding solutions to issues that are creating obstacles to peace, happiness and prosperity.

Mr. Franco (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The unanimous decision taken at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly to declare the year 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace charted the course for the beginning of this new century, a century in which the culture of war and the solving of conflicts through violent means should give way to the culture of peace and tolerance. However, for that to become reality mankind will have to learn to coexist on the basis of the universal values of peace. No less important is the resolution adopted by the General Assembly proclaiming the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

The exercise of peace cannot be founded solely on political, social and economic agreements between Governments or parties to a conflict. In order for peace to be stable and lasting it must be based on society's intellectual and moral convictions and on its ethical and solidarity-based behaviour. Conceived in that way, peace can be expressed in very simple ways: to learn to live together.

Our great challenge is therefore to move from the stereotypes of war to the ideals of peace — from the culture of violence and intolerance to peaceful coexistence; towards a culture founded on new values and ways of behaving in which the principles of liberty,

justice and democracy prevail; towards a culture that will make it possible for us always to resort to dialogue and negotiation in order to resolve our differences.

Colombia is pleased to learn, from various reports, of the many wide-ranging activities carried out by the United Nations system on the subject of the culture of peace. I would like to highlight, in particular, the work done by the United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) since the holding of the first General Conference, in 1946, when it stated that education — because of its ability to instil principles in the minds of men and women — was the basic tool with which to build peace. On the basis of an initiative by Colombia that had the valuable support of UNESCO, the Organization of American States hosted a meeting, in our own region, of governmental experts in October 1999 to draft an educational programme for peace in the western hemisphere.

After being involved in an internal conflict for over four decades, my country reclaimed the right to live in peace. We demonstrated that three years ago, when 10 million Colombians exercised their rights as citizens and gave the President of the Republic a clear and specific mandate to find peace through a peaceful solution. The Government of Colombia has committed itself to a clear policy of peace in the firm conviction that a negotiated solution is an essential element in establishing peace on a broad and solid foundation.

In the same vein, as part of the celebrations of the International Year for the Culture of Peace, 12.8 million Colombians — almost one third of the population — signed the 2000 Manifesto. In so doing, all the signatories committed themselves to put into practice in their daily lives the principles of non-violence and the culture of peace. The First Lady of Colombia presented the Manifesto at the special ceremony held at United Nations Headquarters to commemorate the International Day of Peace.

As the principal victims of the armed conflict, the children of Colombia are the focus of attention. Every effort undertaken to fulfil the commitment made in the resolution proclaiming the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World will be made on their behalf. We have committed ourselves to undertaking national and international efforts so that the children of the world do not take part in the internal conflicts of their countries, either directly or indirectly.

We are convinced that violence is avoidable; but preventing violence requires great commitment. Undoubtedly, dealing with underlying causes is of greater benefit to society than intervening in existing conflicts. In order to do that we must be continually willing — every day — to find shared solutions and to keep the objective facts of disputes from going out of control and becoming hostilities.

Colombia's commitment to peace is unequivocal. We are convinced that mobilizing the international community, and the United Nations in particular, will serve to solidify the culture of peace. The Decade just beginning will continue if we all commit ourselves to instilling an education for peace in future generations.

Ms. Enkhtsetseg (Mongolia): My delegation is privileged to address this plenary meeting of the Millennium Assembly on the agenda item entitled "Culture of peace" as the international community finds itself in the midst of observing the International Year for the Culture of Peace, which is to be followed immediately by the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

Both of them are inspired by and based on the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, which was aimed at uniting the world around a new set of post-cold-war norms, values and principles at the dawn of a new millennium. The spirit of the Declaration has been further enhanced by the commitment made by world leaders at the Millennium Summit to the fundamental values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance and shared responsibility. That commitment gives rise to the hope that our children and grandchildren will live in a world that is free from violence and discrimination, a world that is more inclusive, caring and sharing.

Mongolia deems it important that activities under the Decade be further complemented by upcoming international events, including the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, both of which are scheduled for next autumn.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/55/377,

which outlines modalities of action to promote the implementation of the Decade with a principal emphasis placed on children and their education, including promotion of the values, attitudes and behaviours of a culture of peace. We also favour a broad-based holistic approach to education, not limiting it to formal education in schools, but including also out-of-school and informal education in the full range of social institutions, including the family and the media.

In addition to the modalities of action referred to in the report at the levels of formal and non-formal education to promote a culture of peace and non-violence, my delegation believes that international educational exchange programmes, especially at the undergraduate level, could further contribute to the attainment of the Decade's goals. The Mongolian Government, despite its severe financial constraints, envisages an increase in the number of young people studying abroad on Government scholarships. We urge the international community, through both bilateral and multilateral channels, to encourage and support educational exchanges for children and young people from various countries and cultures as part of the activities to be undertaken during the Decade.

In recognition of the crucial role of education in, inter alia, instilling the values of peace and tolerance, Mongolia has reiterated on a number of occasions its conviction about the need to launch a United Nations literacy decade. In that respect, my delegation looks forward to a report of the Secretary-General, to be prepared in cooperation with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) for the next session of the General Assembly, containing a draft plan of action and time-frame for a United Nations literacy decade. We also believe that the launch of such a decade would marshal the necessary political will and commitment at the highest level towards attaining the goals set by the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All.

In the national context, it should be underlined that education goals are accorded top priority by the newly elected Government of Mongolia, as reflected in its action programme. The Government of Mongolia stands resolved, *inter alia*, to increase and encourage public and private investment in education, improve the management and quality of education at both formal and non-formal levels, expand pre-school education and undertake the training of trainers. Furthermore, the Government of Mongolia has put forward the ambitious goal of computerizing all secondary schools in the country and providing them with Internet access in line with the specific objective of the Decade that special efforts should be made to extend access to new technologies to the unreached.

The year that is drawing to a close has helped motivate international public opinion in support of a culture of peace. The small portion of the 60 million signatures in support of UNESCO's Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence that came from Mongolia represents a humble but nonetheless important commitment by many of my compatriots to practising tolerance and non-violence in their daily lives.

Let me, in conclusion, cite an Italian educator, Maria Montessori, who noted that

> "establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all that politics can do is keep us out of war".

Indeed, durable peace cannot be maintained through political settlements alone. A culture of peace, tolerance and non-violence ought to be nurtured in every individual from his or her early days. The future belongs to our children. In order for that future to be peaceful and prosperous, our children should grow up with a conviction that understating, tolerance and solidarity are the real strengths that will make the weapons of war rust in peace.

Mr. Carranza (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since

> "wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

That idea, from the preamble to the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO), forms the basis for the concept of a culture of peace. The essence of constructing a culture of peace is the prevention of violence and conflict.

During this, the International Year for the Culture of Peace, we must heighten our awareness of the importance of values, attitudes, traditions, customs, behaviour and ways of life that respect life, human beings and human rights, that both embody and create social interaction and interchange based on principles

of freedom, justice, democracy, human rights, tolerance and solidarity. Those are the values that define the objective of a total rejection of violence and that help prevent conflict by addressing its causes.

We welcome the action taken by UNESCO and other agencies in the United Nations system with respect to a culture of peace. We also welcome the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. We are certain that the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace will be a benchmark that will encourage the international community in its efforts towards world peace and will help prevent violence and contribute to world peace.

Guatemala is among the countries that have benefited from programmes of action on a culture of peace. Guatemala's Culture of Peace Project is a UNESCO programme that enjoys the financial support of the Italian Government in partnership with the Guatemalan Ministry of Education.

Since the signing of the peace accords on 29 December 1996, Guatemala has been carrying out a process of strengthening peace based on a culture of peace and democratic participation. The peace accords laid the foundation, and helped open up broader political and social spaces, making it possible to encourage participation in the national debate by groups and sectors that had historically been marginalized.

A purpose of Guatemala's Culture of Peace Project is to mobilize citizens towards a culture of peace and non-violence. The idea is that institutional and non-institutional actors — such as men, women, teenagers, girls, boys, academics, officials, intellectuals, business people, religious leaders and mayors — will all be involved in a sustained effort to ensure that our daily activities show respect for and strengthen the democratic spaces, development and peaceful coexistence that became possible with the signing of the peace accords.

This project has helped to open up opportunities for reflection on and discussion of the culture of peace in civil society, and has promoted training on themes associated with the culture of peace among educators and youth and community leaders. At the same time, contacts are being coordinated and established with the Ministry of Education so that the subject of the culture of peace and democracy can be included in the revised curriculum and civic education programmes.

Other aspects of the project designed to contribute to the consolidation of the peace process in our country relate to the promotion of citizen responsibility, the fostering of an understanding of and respect for social and cultural realities and pluralism, support for comprehensive youth development, the provision of civic education and education for democratic citizenship and the promotion of intercultural relations.

Through seminars, conferences, training courses, studies, research, youth and community activities, cooperation between national and international institutions, and support from them, our Culture of Peace Project has set about training people to promote a culture of peace and reject violence in all areas of social interaction, particularly among young people.

I am pleased to announce that more than 25 associations, universities, schools, businesses, communications media companies and governmental agencies have been involved in the International Year for the Culture of Peace in Guatemala, and that over 35 events have been organized to promote the culture of peace and the rejection of violence.

We are pleased that the Secretary-General has proposed — and UNESCO has agreed — that UNESCO should continue to play its coordinating role in the coming decade. Such initiatives will enable us to continue to share in the process of strengthening and fostering the culture of peace in our society together with other countries in the world that are seeking peace and social justice.

In conclusion, my delegation welcomes the leading role played by the United Nations in promoting a culture of peace at the global level. Speaking for Guatemala in particular, we welcome the invaluable contribution made by UNESCO and the cooperation of friendly countries in support of our national efforts to consolidate peace. We also congratulate UNESCO on its work in coordinating the International Year for the Culture of Peace, whose success is reflected in the involvement of so many countries and people, including the over 60 million people who signed Manifesto 2000 to support a culture of peace and reject violence.

Mrs. Austria-Garcia (Philippines): I should like at the outset to state that the Philippines supports the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace adopted during the fifty-third session. The Philippines actively participated in the deliberations in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on this subject, and is therefore gratified to see the seed of these deliberations take root.

Developments in the past two decades have raised our hopes that peace might be within our reach. We have seen the cold war end, the iron curtain fall, democracy restored and countries achieve progress that they had never attained before. We have seen globalization knit countries together and information technology bind those of us far away. Yet, hanging in the shadows of this rosy image of progress and prosperity, are raging violence, deep discontent and deep-seated fear, while a multitude of human beings are living in poverty and squalor.

A few months ago our leaders met and discussed ways of addressing the pressing concerns of our world: poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation, the need for shelter and many other issues. But their deliberations converged on one subject, the attainment of which seems for ever to elude us. That subject is peace.

Peace is not a new concept. We have been discussing it for centuries. Philosophers and political scientists have dealt extensively with the subject of peace, undertaking studies that analyse even the minutest behaviour of man in order to find that missing link that would lead us to the peace that so eludes us. Why is peace so elusive? Political scientists would say that if they knew the answer there would be no more war.

While the answer seems to elude us, it is comforting that we have shown firm determination to pursue the elimination of war. The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, and continued dialogue to sort out our differences, are proof of our commitment. All that has to be done now is to turn our words into deeds.

Our Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace underscores education as one of the essential foundations on which to promote a culture of peace in the minds of our peoples. That is right, and the initiative must be pursued. Newborn babies have no idea what kind of world they are entering into. We, who have come before them, acclimatize them to their new environment. Our societies orient them to the norms and values that are held in esteem. But, sadly, we sometimes stress our differences and not our common humanity. May I propose that, from the very start of human life, we introduce the way of peace and mould values in our children that respect the life of each and every person, the law and justice and promote tolerance. Let us cast away our biases and prejudices that have built barriers between us in our world. Let us use the media to promote the value of empathy so that our children may be more than willing to understand others and accept differences. Let us make our new information technologies available for the promotion of a way of life that advocates and nurtures peace.

Next year is the beginning of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. Let us all endeavour to give these children — our children — the opportunity to experience peace in their lifetime. But, first, let us plant the seeds of the culture of peace in their hearts so that they may be able to harvest the fruits of peace in the future.

Mr. Patricio (Mozambique): At the outset, I should like to welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (A/55/377).

We believe that the important guidelines set out in this report will indeed be very useful for the taking of concrete actions towards effective implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace for the Decade, adopted last year by the General Assembly.

The proclamation of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace constitutes an excellent starting point and an opportunity to reflect on the cross-cutting actions necessary to bring a culture of peace to the centre of the efforts of the United Nations, Governments and other international and national actors towards a more just and peaceful world in the new millennium.

It is in recognition of the crucial importance of a culture of peace that the Millennium Summit included the concept of a culture of peace among the fundamental values essential to international relations

in the twenty-first century. The Millennium Declaration states:

> "Human beings must respect one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted." *(A/RES/55/2, para. 6)*

The report before us today provides a wide range of actions geared to bringing children to the centre of the Decade for a Culture of Peace. We believe that this is an important step towards putting an end to the disproportionate suffering that children are subjected to through different forms of violence. Children are indeed gravely affected, in time of peace and in time of war, by, among other things, the consequences of natural disasters, genocide, armed conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies.

We must all spare no effort to halt this situation. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, has presented important recommendations in this regard, building on Ms. Graça Machel's report, that we all must make efforts to implement. We must not only ratify, but also, and above all, implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international legal instruments protecting children.

We must all work together to address the root causes of conflicts, which bring untold suffering to innocent civilians and in particular to children, both as victims and instruments of violence. For that purpose, all of us must implement, expand and sustain a culture of peace among all members of our societies and countries.

The debate yesterday on the causes of conflict in Africa underlined that the world is still ravaged by many conflicts, most of which are in Africa. It was also indicated that any meaningful action to put an end to the proliferation of conflicts in Africa — and elsewhere, for that matter — requires the concerted efforts of all international actors in addressing the root causes of conflict.

The United Nations and all donor countries and agencies must address seriously the problems of poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease — such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis — which affect a large segment of the world's population. Likewise, there is need to address the external debt problem, promote investment and economic growth, provide adequate levels of international aid and open world markets to the developing world.

A culture of peace will be meaningful and yield positive results only if all international and national actors seriously address the causes of conflict, thus creating an environment conducive to world peace and security. Conscious that wars start in the mind of man, we see a culture of peace and non-violence as an important and effective vehicle in the prevention of the emergence and recurrence of conflicts.

Being from a country that has experienced a protracted war of aggression but now enjoys peace and stability, I cannot but underline the value of the principles of forgiveness, tolerance and reconciliation as the cornerstone of the promotion of a durable peace. Our people cherish, and have always struggled for, peace and stability in Mozambique, southern Africa, Africa as a whole and, indeed, in the entire world.

The story of the success achieved in the peace process in Mozambique reflects a deliberate choice made by our people to strengthen peace through a process of continuing dialogue in an environment of tolerance, unity in diversity, and respect for individual choices and freedoms as the foundations of the country's lasting peace and steady march towards sustainable development and progress.

Placing children at the centre of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace can only bring larger gains in the area of achieving durable peace and security. Today's children are tomorrow's statesmen, professionals and mothers or fathers. Education is indeed the most suitable instrument to introduce and disseminate a culture of peace and non-violence. Children, youth and adults should be taught to embrace the values of tolerance, equality, friendship, understanding and respect for human dignity, based upon universal principles and simultaneously on the traditions and experience of each society.

The success of the Decade for a Culture of Peace requires, in our view, the full participation of Governments, international organizations and civil society at all levels.

In this regard, we would like to support the strategy outlined in the Secretary-General's report for the implementation of a global movement for a culture of peace, which calls for the involvement of everyone, at all levels of society, in the transition from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence.

Mozambique will continue to be an active partner of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other United Nations agencies in the promotion of a culture of peace, both in Mozambique and throughout the world. The successful implementation of the Decade will be a step towards ensuring a better world for coming generations and will reinforce the foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world.

Finally, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his continued commitment to the cause of peace worldwide, and UNESCO and other United Nations specialized agencies for their initiatives with regard to the Decade.

Mozambique recommits itself to the principle of a culture of peace and non-violence and stands ready to contribute to the success of the Decade.

Mr. Andino Salazar (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to express the satisfaction of the delegation of El Salvador at the extensive consideration being given by the General Assembly to the important item entitled "Culture of peace", especially as we are celebrating this year the International Year of the Culture of Peace, as proclaimed by the Assembly in resolution 52/15 on 20 November 1997.

El Salvador attaches great importance to this item because it is closely linked to the peace-building process in El Salvador following the armed conflict which engulfed our country during the 1980s, and to the extensive experience acquired by our society during the process of negotiations and, subsequently, during the stages of national reconstruction and reconciliation.

San Salvador held a National Forum of Reflection on Peace, Education and Culture in late April 1993, through which its Government — under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other international agencies — helped to lay the theoretical and practical foundations, at the international level, for the international community's subsequent discussions and agreement on the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

Among the main ideas arising from our experience in El Salvador are, inter alia, the idea that in order to promote a culture of peace, one has to define the criteria underlying a systematic programme of the culture of peace. These criteria have to ensure that the programme becomes a national undertaking.

Furthermore, the programme of the culture of peace must help a new identity to emerge, taking into account the process of human development. To that end, one has to give thought to the factors that militate against a culture of peace, both in our vision of national identity before conflict and in visions that are engendered afterwards.

It is essential to reconcile those cultural visions with peace, creating a dynamic of cultural dialogue in order to save, create, discuss and disseminate the values of peace through education, social communication, cultural creativity and the exercise of democracy. In our daily lives, these values would be incorporated when it is shown that they help to meet yearnings, needs and common aspirations, and when they help to build solidarity between individuals and peoples. The central tenet of the culture of peace is that the political system use unconditional respect for all human rights as its ethical reference.

As far as El Salvador is concerned, the fact that there is a programme for the culture of peace and national identity does not mean that all societies must become similar. On the contrary, harmonization means that each of the various parties to a conflict, on the basis of and in keeping with its own principles, sees in the national programme its own interests and those of other sectors, as well as the common interests that legitimize the process.

A culture of peace does not make conflicts and disputes that exist within societies and between nations simply disappear. The culture of peace seeks to offer alternatives for peaceful solutions to conflicts and disputes, through harmonizing fundamental common interests, thus preventing the disintegration of society and promoting stronger social fabrics that foster justice and equity. It also should ensure that every member can feel interrelated and interdependent within one single national identity.

El Salvador understands that building a culture of peace is neither a single act nor a set of acts or projects. Rather, it is an ongoing, agreed, systematic and comprehensive participatory process that must become part of the dynamic of national construction in various areas — political, economic, social and cultural. Therefore, this effort to build a culture of peace must be strategic in nature, in accordance with the fundamental and universal principles of the human being in order to promote sustainable human development.

In its resolution 39/11, adopted on 12 November 1984, the General Assembly declared that the peoples of this earth have a sacred right to peace, and that preserving the right of peoples to peace and promoting its implementation is a fundamental obligation for every State. This declaration was recognized and adopted at the hemispheric level by the Foreign Ministers and heads of delegation of States members of the Organization of American States (OAS), meeting in Caracas, Venezuela, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the OAS Charter. This was called the Caracas Reaffirmation, and it expressed our commitment to further develop the culture of peace, development and non-violence, explicitly recognizing the right to peace as inalienable and inherent to the dignity of the human being.

The Government of El Salvador is strongly committed to promoting and strengthening the culture of peace, a point expressed by our Minister for Foreign Affairs in her statement during the general debate of the Millennium Assembly, when she reiterated that El Salvador attaches great importance

> "to the continuity of the efforts focused on strengthening a culture of peace, especially on the eve of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World." *(A/55/PV.19, pp. 15-16)*

Following the General Assembly's adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, the Government of El Salvador carried out various actions geared towards implementing the Programme of Action, and I would like to highlight the following events. The first is the annual Peace Festival, held every year in January to commemorate the signing of the peace agreements and to encourage citizens to think about peace. A second event was the strengthening of the Culture for Peace and Democracy in Central America programme, carried out by the University for Peace. As a result, more than six specialized conferences were held to help people understand better and conceptualize the culture of peace in El Salvador and also to awaken the media to the urgent need to build a culture of peace in our country. Third, in El Salvador, we held two Central American military forums for the culture of peace, the goal of which was to analyse the role of the armed forces and the armies in Central America in strengthening democracy, the rule of law, development, Central American integration and the culture of peace in the present international and regional context.

Fourth, our Foreign Ministry and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) signed an agreement to set up a UNESCO office for the programme of a culture of peace. El Salvador thus became the first country in the world where the UNESCO office would be devoted entirely to promoting and strengthening the culture of peace in the country.

Fifth, we actively promoted the subject of the culture of peace in all multilateral forums, particularly through a resolution in the Commission on Human Rights, adopted by consensus in 1997.

Sixth, we incorporated the culture of peace in the governmental plan of President Guillermo Flores Pérez called "The New Alliance", which covers the period 1999-2004.

Seventh, the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador proclaimed the year 2000 the "National Year of the Culture of Peace".

Eighth was the establishment of a National Committee for the Culture of Peace, headed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which brings together various State institutions and governmental and non-governmental bodies, all involved in promoting the culture of peace. Their main activities include elaborating and implementing our National Plan of Action on the Culture of Peace, which has the following four main areas: education for peace; actions to prevent and eradicate violence; measures to promote democratic participation; and promoting mechanisms for alternative ways of resolving conflicts.

Finally, the Central American Parliament recently adopted resolution AP/2-CXVII-2000 entitled "Support

for the commemoration of Manifesto 2000: International Year for the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence".

In conclusion, I reiterate the commitment and political will of the Government of El Salvador to the important task of promoting and strengthening the culture of peace. This is our contribution to achieving the purposes and principles of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security and our recognition that the very establishment of the United Nations was the first decisive step taken by the international community to build a culture of peace. We believe that our task for the immediate future is to ensure that this effort continues, as recognized in the Millennium Declaration by all heads of State and Government who participated in the Millennium Summit, which states that a culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted as a fundamental value essential to international relations in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Jerandi (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): The culture of peace is an issue that is at the very heart of the objectives and concerns of the United Nations, whose every action, achievement and effort is ultimately aimed at serving peace.

The consideration of this question at the fifty-fifth session is of particular importance, coming as it does as the international community is celebrating the International Year for the Culture of Peace, proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/15 of 20 November 1997, and as the world is preparing to launch the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, also proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/25 of 10 November 1998. Two other important international events should be noted: the proclamation of the year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations and the convening of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in South Africa in 2001. All of this will occur in the context of the broad international action for tolerance that has been undertaken since 1995 under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

This certainly demonstrates the unprecedented international momentum in favour of peace and the culture of peace. Indeed, it is a singular moment in the history of mankind, the full symbolic importance of which was captured by the Millennium Summit, which brought the leaders of the entire world together in New York in September at the greatest gathering of heads of State and Government in the history of humanity. Testimony to this is the Millennium Declaration adopted at the conclusion of the Summit, a document whose implementation the States Members are currently considering in General Assembly consultations.

Aware of the importance of the efforts to be undertaken in the coming years with a view to strengthening the culture of peace as the basis for peace, security and global well-being, the international community in 1998 drafted the Programme of Action on a Culture for Peace, which the General Assembly adopted in its resolution 53/243 B of 13 September 1999, by which it also adopted the Declaration on a Culture of Peace. The Declaration and Programme of Action are two valuable documents that outline sustained international action to ensure the durability of the foundations of peace as we celebrate the International Year for the Culture of Peace in 2000 and observe the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World from 2001 to 2010.

The Declaration emphasizes the high priority to be given to the transformation of values, attitudes, behaviour and lifestyles to the benefit of peace between individuals, groups and nations. It rightly stresses the strong link between a flourishing culture of peace and the determined and ongoing activities of various actors of international life in such diverse fields as the peaceful settlement of disputes; mutual respect and understanding; international cooperation; the promotion of democracy, development and universal respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms; the eradication of poverty and illiteracy; the reduction of inequalities among and within nations; the promotion of sustainable economic and social development; the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; respect for and protection of the rights of children; the promotion of the free circulation of information at all levels; and enhanced transparency and responsibility in the management of public affairs in this respect.

The elimination of all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and associated intolerance and the promotion of understanding, tolerance and

solidarity among all civilizations, peoples and cultures — including with regard to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities — are other areas identified by the Declaration for action to promote the culture of peace.

The Declaration stresses the essential role not only of Governments, but also of civil society and the media, in the development of such a culture, given that responsibility must be collective if we wish ultimately to undertake the task of global education. In the 1999 Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, the General Assembly broke new ground. Indeed, as the Secretary-General quite rightly points out in his report on the matter, the aims of the Programme of Action correspond to priority areas of United Nations action, but what is new is their inclusion within the common conceptual framework of a culture of peace and non-violence so as to maximize their complementarity and synergy.

It is clear that these diverse fields of action are highly complementary and interdependent. How could we separate or differentiate between the functions and aims of such fields as education, sustainable economic and social development, respect for and promotion of human rights, the promotion of tolerance and solidarity, the free circulation of information or the maintenance of international peace and security? The Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace harmoniously links these areas and encourages complementary and coordinated action among them.

Tunisia has adopted and is tirelessly implementing this global approach domestically and in its activities abroad to strengthen the foundations of peace in its broadest sense, inspired by the values of tolerance, openness and dialogue that have been rooted in its history down through the course of the millennia. Tunisia firmly believes that relations among nations can develop and flourish only in a climate of dialogue, concord and solidarity and in mutual respect and cooperation on an equal footing, because, above and beyond their nationality, race, religion and culture, all human beings share the same faith in the timeless values of liberty, justice, equality, tolerance and peace.

We feel that, in order to give full importance to the year 2000, proclaimed the International Year for the Culture of Peace, and to the decade of 2001 to 2010, proclaimed the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, and in order to achieve the objectives assigned to these by the international community, it is of the highest priority that we gather the energies and sincere efforts of all players at the international level, be they Governments, members of civil society or regional and international organizations.

The United Nations, as a unique universal forum, and UNESCO, as an organization with a leading role in the areas of education and training, have a crucial mission that must be supported by the international community.

Fortunately for humankind, the twenty-first century is not beginning as the last century began, in the throws of war and suffering. In order to preserve this development — in short, in order to preserve peace — we must leave no stone unturned. What is at stake is the future of humanity during this crucial step in its history. An international mobilization on behalf of peace through the development and promotion of the culture of peace is the surest and least costly route.

Mr. Kobayashi (Japan): As we embark on the new century, it is a deplorable reality that the international community continues to experience serious tragedies caused by conflicts, violence and discrimination. It is therefore essential that in commemorating the International Year for the Culture of Peace, we strengthen our efforts to realize a world where every individual can live free of fear. In this context, we consider particularly significant the launching of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, since it will add new momentum to our efforts to create a culture of peace by fostering respect for the lives and dignity of other people, as well as by promoting understanding among different cultures.

As the report of the Secretary-General on the International Decade rightly indicates, the approach we take towards constructing a culture of peace may encompass a wide range of activities. The distinctiveness of the concept of a culture of peace lies in the fact that it emphasizes inter-linkages among every realm of activity relating to the realization of peace and non-violence in the world. Recognizing this and responding to the call for a global movement contained in the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, every actor in the international community, including civil society and international organizations, should strengthen its efforts to cultivate and

consolidate a culture of peace through education and dialogue.

My delegation believes strongly that, as the Declaration reminds us, it is our responsibility to foster a culture of peace, particularly among the younger generations, whose members are to build the society of the future. Based on this belief, the Government of Japan has been conducting the following activities as a means of promoting a culture of peace:

First, at the governmental level, in order to raise the consciousness and disseminate the concept of a culture of peace among the Japanese people, the Government of Japan has launched a publicity campaign, producing brochures on the subject and distributing them to educational institutions throughout the country. Furthermore, last March, a symposium on a culture of peace was conducted as a part of the Global Youth Exchange Programme 2000, which is a forum for youth from more than forty countries around the world aimed at discussing global issues.

Secondly, Japan actively supports non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have been playing an important role in promoting a culture of peace. The National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan has produced educational materials and textbooks for children on a culture of peace in Japanese by translating the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) model texts and has distributed them nationwide. It also participated actively in Manifesto 2000, an initiative that calls for people to live lives of peace and non-violence. In Japan, a campaign conducted on the streets and on the Internet at the grassroots level succeeded in collecting more than one million signatures, which were submitted by Japanese youth delegates last September to Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO. Many other initiatives have been undertaken by NGOs, some under close collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education of Japan.

My delegation believes that a major role in building up a global movement for a culture of peace needs to be played by UNESCO. We commend UNESCO for the contribution it has made as a principal coordinator for the International Year for the Culture of Peace. Japan hopes that UNESCO will continue its efforts to increase the momentum generated throughout the Year. In particular, Japan hopes that UNESCO will play a leading role in implementing educational programmes in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance and help to prevent violence and conflict, as mentioned in the Dakar Framework for Action. We are convinced that the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations will also contribute to enhancing understanding among cultures and promoting the causes of the International Decade. And we appreciate the relevant initiatives taken by the United Nations Children's Fund, which are crucial in the cultivation of a culture of peace among young people.

The Preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO states that, as

> "wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

Japan agrees and believes that all the activities for the International Year for the Culture of Peace will sow seeds of peace in the minds of people today, which will then take root, flourish and grow into a solid bulwark of peace. Let me assure you that Japan will participate most actively in global efforts towards that end.

Mrs. Chassoul (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to take this opportunity to offer the condolences of the Government and people of Costa Rica to the families of the victims of the air accidents that have occurred over the past few days.

We would also like to express the gratitude of our delegation for the valuable report of the Secretary-General on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, as well as for the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) referring to the application of the Declaration of Principles and the Follow-Up Plan of Action of the United Nations Year for Tolerance. I would also like to thank Ambassador Chowdhury of Bangladesh for introducing this subject.

For centuries, humanity has lived under the shadow of the culture of war, destruction and death. Violence and hatred have reigned in hearts of men. Nations have been drawn into armed and social conflicts because of prevalent hostility. How many lives have been wasted, how many dreams, hopes and aspirations have been cast by the wayside? How much

innocence has been lost and how much sadness has been created?

At this point in time, at the beginning of a new millennium, humanity is facing favourable circumstances to change this situation and implant a culture of peace. The shadows of the cold war and the arms race have evaporated. Finally, we see lifted the veil of ideological confrontation and we see a greater awareness of the barbarism represented by war and injustice. The world today is fertile ground for planting the seed of peace with a view to substituting the excesses of destruction and conflict with the virtues of peace, tolerance and cooperation between all men.

In order to achieve such a lofty objective, it is indispensable to create, as indicated by the Programme of Action adopted in 1999, a global movement to promote the culture of peace. The solemn declaration of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace was only a first step in this direction.

The creation of the culture of peace requires efforts to be made in all areas. The motives for conflicts and violence are multifaceted. Consequently, efforts to promote the culture of peace must confront all of the causes which are at the heart of disputes and antagonisms.

The first step towards building a culture of peace must be the education of our young and our children. In this respect, the family must necessarily play a fundamental role because, as the Secretary-General quite rightly pointed out in his report, it is through the family that children are taught basic values and receive the emotional support that they need in order to achieve their full physical and emotional development. Children within their families receive the essential values of tolerance and mutual respect and learn about cooperation and brotherliness. If families weaken or fail in this task, future citizens will lack the necessary values for social coexistence.

Secondly, it is necessary to include in the curriculum of academic activities aspects which teach students about the culture of peace. In this respect, my delegation welcomes the suggestions of the Secretary-General with regard to the adoption of an education strategy targeted at including in the education of young people a world view that includes a clear rejection of violence, love for dialogue and negotiation, an affinity with tolerance, democracy and justice as well as a true faith in the basic principles of human rights.

We recognize that true and sustainable peace can only be reached when we have guaranteed adequate conditions for people's lives, when there is a sufficient level of economic development to allow everyone's basic needs to be met and when fundamental rights are respected and disputes resolved through democratic means. In this context, investment in development, education, health, human rights and democracy is a direct investment in peace for the future. In this respect, the promotion of human dignity and the search for what is in the common good are indispensable requirements for peace.

In this sense, international cooperation makes a direct contribution to the culture of peace in supporting initiatives aimed at development, democracy and the promotion of human rights. These development programmes will help us to prevent future conflicts. For this reason, we urge the international community to maintain its financial and political support to these programmes.

On the other hand, the experience of Costa Rica has shown us that it is only possible to create a culture of peace if we respect democracy. This is the only mechanism which provides everybody with equal opportunities to participate in political processes, as well as to benefit from economic development. Democracy is the only political system which guarantees true social peace.

We welcome the various activities carried out under the aegis of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) aimed at creating a culture of peace and a greater awareness of tolerance. And amongst these, we would like to stress the activities of awareness-raising carried out by the Audio Visual Production Department of the University for Peace.

My Government firmly supports the activities of this institute of higher education which, thanks to the mandate to promote a spirit of comprehension, tolerance and peaceful coexistence between human beings, is well able to take a leadership role in the promotion of the culture of peace.

The promotion of peace requires an ongoing sustained effort on the part of everyone in order to create a spirit of mutual respect and rejection of violence. We are sure that the activities related to the celebration of this International Year for the Culture of

Peace will teach us to reject violence, to love dialogue and tolerance.

Mr. Mbanefo (Nigeria): I am pleased to address the General Assembly on agenda item 33 entitled "Culture of Peace". The Nigerian delegation wishes to thank previous speakers for their contributions, which no doubt provide a better understanding of the challenges we must face globally in promoting a culture of peace. May I also thank the Secretary-General for his concise, yet comprehensive report on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, which provides a good basis for our debate on this subject. Our reflections on the issue of the culture of peace this year has particular relevance — the year 2000 is the International Year for the Culture of Peace. The year also provides us the opportunity to reflect more deeply as we prepare for the decade ahead which has been proclaimed by the General Assembly, as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

The quest for peace is global because everybody desires peace. Indeed, this body, the United Nations, established in the aftermath of the most devastating war ever recorded in the history of mankind, was born out of this desire. Fifty-five years later, we can attest that the world has generally become a safer place in which to live. Nevertheless, we are concerned about new challenges that have emerged, which threaten the peace we so cherish. These are the challenges of poverty, new diseases and the proliferation of violence and internal conflicts, especially in Africa. There is a need for us to rededicate ourselves to the ideals embodied in the Charter of the United Nations by adopting the culture of peace, which consists of a change of attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction based on the principles and objectives of the Charter, the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy, tolerance and the promotion of development, particularly in the developing countries.

It is for this reason that Nigeria supports the proclamation by the General Assembly of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace and 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. We are convinced that the Year and Decade will help our common efforts to foster peace, harmony, human rights, democracy and development in the new millennium.

The Nigerian delegation shares the views expressed by the Secretary-General in his report that the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 53/243 B, can guide our collective efforts towards achieving a just and peaceful global community in the new millennium. Fundamentally, peace is indivisible. However, we subscribe to the notion that children, the innocent victims of conflicts, should be at the centre of this noble objective of peace for all in this decade. The elimination of violence is therefore the best legacy we can bequeath to our children. Secondly, because the future belongs to children the future of humanity is in their hands. Consequently, our march towards a culture of peace and non-violence can best be achieved and sustained when nurtured from childhood.

By stating that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed", the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognizes the central role of education in the construction of a culture of peace. We share the conviction that education should be accorded a special place in our efforts to inculcate a culture of peace in our societies. We must teach our children the culture of peace and the importance of non-violence in the resolution of conflict. In this regard, we recognize the important role that UNESCO has played, and can play, in the promotion of a culture of peace. We believe that a deliberate effort must be made on our part to inculcate in our children knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and norms that promote social interaction based on respect for life, human rights and the dignity of every human being without prejudice or discrimination of any kind. Education for a culture of peace should therefore be not only through formal education in schools, but also through informal education. Thus, parents, teachers, politicians, religious bodies and groups, artists, journalists, social workers and non-governmental organizations all have a key role to play in the promotion of a culture of peace.

Peace is not just the absence of violence and war. For us in Nigeria, and, we believe, in the developing countries, peace also means freedom from want. In his millennium report, the Secretary-General said the combination of extreme poverty with extreme

inequalities makes many other problems worse. While we reaffirm our commitment to work as a nation and in concert with other nations to make the world a more peaceful and better place to live in, our delegation wishes to use this opportunity to draw attention to the effects of external debt on the ability of most developing countries to bring meaningful changes in the well-being of their peoples. Poverty is antithetical to peace, and the poorer a country, the less it enjoys peace. This truism is manifested in the growing number of conflicts in the developing countries. We therefore once again call on our creditor nations to consider debt cancellation as a sign of solidarity in our collective efforts for the enthronement of a culture of peace in our society.

In conclusion, Nigeria is of the firm belief that we, as members of the world community, owe it to ourselves and to future generations to build a world where all nations, all races and all peoples can live in dignity and in peace with one another through the construction and maintenance of a culture of peace.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): The item before the General Assembly today is entitled "Culture of peace". In the view of my delegation, it is particularly important for several reasons.

Yesterday, the General Assembly considered the causes of conflict and, particularly, conditions for sustainable development and durable peace in Africa. Is it a scheduling coincidence that today the Assembly is discussing the culture of peace? We would like to see this as a happy coincidence that may be a sign of the times. We have great expectations. Africa, which stretches out its hand in the search for peace, expects much from this debate. Africa has proclaimed the year 2000 the year of peace. Africa wants peace. Africa is begging for peace. Today, the problem is important. As the great African luminary Saint Augustine said so vividly, "a peace is the tranquillity of order." How many African countries enjoy such peace today? Today there are many African countries where there is neither order nor tranquillity, where young people and women have not experienced a single year of peace.

This debate is also important in that it takes us back to the dream of the founding fathers of our Organization, which has just been solemnly reaffirmed at the Millennium Summit. That dream was to build a world of peace in which people live peacefully in brotherhood. Finally, the debate reminds us of the need for a true political will to translate that dream into reality and to trace the new parameters of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. That point was clearly highlighted in the excellent report of the Secretary-General submitted under this item.

It is clear that standing by our commitments is our task at the beginning of this century. It is also our most difficult task at the dawn of the millennium. Let us recognize that, particularly in the 1990s, at the United Nations we have not kept all the promises made in the face of the major global problems: education, health, the environment, population, human rights, the status of women, youth, social development and food.

The essential commitment [illegible] half a century ago — enshrined in the [illegible] United Nations — was that the peoples [illegible] were

> "determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

Has that essential commitment been honoured?

Does there exist the human solidarity proclaimed in the Charter and in the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a solidarity that the two organizations have a duty to strengthen as the basis of the just and lasting peace that people aspire to? Unfortunately, there is not a shadow of a doubt as to the answer.

Today, after the Millennium Summit, we have no choice. The squandering of wealth, the degradation of the environment, the heightening of disparities, the growth of fanaticism and other forms of fundamentalism can no longer be tolerated. Conflicts, whether armed or otherwise, with their heavy costs and flows of refugees must end; better yet, preventive action should be taken to prevent their ever happening again. For that to happen, we must invest in peace. We know the causes of war and conflict. We also know the elements of, and the road to, peace.

Let us recall the commitments we made in the declarations and programmes of action of the various summits and conferences held since 1990. Let us recall the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations. Let us recall the Secretary-General's Millennium Summit report, entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations

in the twenty-first century". Finally, let us recall the Millennium Declaration. Let us also recall what the poet Saadi said:

> "He who learns the rules of wisdom without applying them to his life is like a person who works his fields without ever sowing them".

It is never too late to sow.

At the Millennium Summit, the President of Cameroon, His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, called for an ethical approach in international affairs that would place human beings at the very centre of our policies, thereby contributing to bringing about a culture of peace. The culture of peace is, after all, the culture of life and of hope.

Peace is more than the absence of war. There is no true peace in a country afflicted by inter-ethnic tension and political instability, even in the absence of deadly explosions or the clash of weapons. Peace implies the existence of freedom and justice so that all can live in harmony and fully develop their capacities. As Pope John Paul II said, peace requires

> "the peaceful resolution of differences and conflicts between nations and the momentum of a social order based on law and justice. More specifically, the foundations of peace must be built on the basis of protecting human rights and the rights of peoples".

In proclaiming 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace, the United Nations is proposing a necessary goal for the international community as a whole. The year 2000 symbolizes the beginning of a new era, but above all it means the end of a century that experienced two world wars, wars of decolonization, the detonation of the atomic bomb, the spread of genocide, and so on. Above and beyond drawing up balance sheets of past successes and failures, 2000 presents us with an opportunity to build the future with much greater optimism.

I am haunted by the beautiful words of hope of Antonio Machado:

> "The future has no more been written than the past has".

Yes, the future is a stimulating prospect, an adventure on the wing. Tomorrow has not been written. This means that building the future cannot be left to chance or luck. The future can be built only if every human being agrees to make peace and non-violence his cardinal ethical principles. Mankind must work together to change the current situation — a situation dominated by discord, violence and selfishness — into a culture of peace, solidarity and development. To meet this challenge, we must adopt the attitudes, values and behaviour that will promote peace and social justice, security and the peaceful resolution of conflict. The imbalances and differences that characterize our world today threaten not only the pace of development and the stability of institutions; above all, they threaten our very survival.

What future of peace, security, prosperity and freedom can there be in a world where 20 per cent of the people own 85 per cent of the goods, while the vast majority lack the most basic things? How can a world with more than a billion illiterates – who are generally exploited, who live in extreme poverty and who are unable to participate in any way — aspire to attaining democracy, much less to strengthening it?

The twenty-first century will be a century of sharing, or there will be no twenty-first century. Today's States and individuals must understand the urgent need to share: to share wealth so that all of us can live decent lives; to share knowledge in order to foster endogenous, environmentally friendly development; and to share civic responsibility in order to preserve democracy and peace.

In the full knowledge that the twenty-first century will be one of sharing, Cameroon, through its President, called at the Millennium Summit for an ethical approach to international relations. The proposal so strongly put forward by President Paul Biya was for a partnership based on a contract committing us to true solidarity; it seems to me that this is essential for a culture of peace in the twenty-first century.

> *Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

That contract for solidarity will foster dialogue and tolerance. Tolerance is the enduring ability to hear what others are saying; in the words of the Millennium Declaration, it means that differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. And dialogue is a constant approach of outreach and of understanding and respect for others. Tolerance and respect for diversity must put an end to

the vicious cycle of confrontation between people who are different. A contract for solidarity will help us to trade weapons for words and will help bring about democracy and good governance.

In the social sphere, a contract for solidarity will enable us urgently to address the priority task of eradicating the poverty, marginalization and exclusion that characterize today's world. We must help all countries acquire the necessary knowledge and technology. As our heads of State put it in the Millennium Declaration, those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most.

Our civilization, which has made extraordinary strides in the most diverse fields, increasingly resembles the giant about which King Nebuchadnezzar dreamt in the Bible. And we know how that dream ended:

> "a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces". (*The Holy Bible, Daniel 2:34*)

If we do not radically put right the imbalances; if we cannot establish peaceful coexistence, with justice and dignity, among all individuals and among all peoples; if we are unable to strike out on the road towards the contract for solidarity that is necessary for a people-centred ethic of relations among nations and for a genuine culture of peace: then we will increasingly resemble that colossus with feet of clay.

We must better understand the words of the preamble to the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization:

> "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

It has been said that humankind must travel the bloody road of war eventually to reach peace. It is through history that natural violence can be stifled and that people can be taught to think. Are we not now ready for such peace, in the light of everything that mankind has experienced and everything it continues to experience?

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): Human beings have sought to secure peace with different weaponry at different times: from weapons made of stone, to arrows and spears, to guns and cannons, to nuclear weapons. None of these have, however, ensured them a lasting peace. Human beings have also experimented with varied security doctrines over the past several centuries. From isolation, expansion and balance of power to mutually assured destruction, all have been put into practice at different stages of the evolution of security thinking.

Yet peace has remained as elusive as ever. In every phase of human evolution, peace has escaped human grasp. It proves the inefficacy of the traditional thinking that weapons or security doctrines are the panacea for war and conflict. It is therefore time that we move beyond these traditional, flawed approaches and begin to explore and pursue a new path of peace. Peace germinates in people's hearts and minds. It grows in their conscience, matures in their attitude and orientation and manifests itself in their behaviour and deeds. That is why a culture of peace becomes of pivotal significance in our perennial search for peace.

A culture of peace might mean different things to different people. But for us in Nepal, it is an enlightened path to our cherished destination of lasting peace and prosperity. It is axiomatic that violence begets violence, that weapons trigger an arms race and that doctrines spur counter-doctrines. Still, unfortunately, we strive to attain peace by stacking up arms and heaping up security paradigms. Every time we invest in things that we know will not work, we become that much morally weaker and economically poorer.

It is time to make a clean break with what does not work and to try something that has the potential to work. If we can experiment with every other wild notion, the culture of peace certainly deserves a chance. I am sure it is going to work wonders. Sometimes, those things that seem least likely to deliver do so unexpectedly. In contrast, the culture of peace is something that is novel, as well as having the moral anchor and material underpinnings to forge conditions in which disputes could be resolved peacefully and conflicts prevented without resort to violence. Experience teaches us that inter-State wars may be won by weapons and force, but that internal conflicts, which have been the major concern in the post-cold-war era, are unwinnable with traditional means. We need new techniques and new weapons to win the hearts of people involved in civil strife.

In this context, the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the General Assembly in

resolution 53/243 B, and the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, point the way forward.

The eight areas of action on a culture of peace are, in fact, precepts that have universal relevance and eternal value. The whole of society has to have a frame of mind and a set of behaviour patterns that are conducive to peace and non-violence. We must therefore begin building peace by inculcating the value of peace in children at their formative stage, get it deeply ingrained in their psyche so that, as adults, they can build a peaceful world for themselves and for future generations.

It is now being increasingly recognized, as many leaders from the developed and developing worlds alike have made clear during the Millennium Assembly, that poverty and conflict form a vicious circle, poverty being a direct cause, as well as an aggravating element, of conflict. It therefore makes abundant sense to invest in sustainable economic and social development so that an increasing population does not have to engage in deadly competition over shrinking resources that barely provide for subsistence and whose exploitation does irreparable damage to the environment.

Human rights have been embraced, and even internalized, by all of us as universal values, and almost every State in the world has taken on itself the responsibility of protecting and promoting them. At the same time, countries have committed themselves to removing gender imbalance and to advancing equality between men and women. Today, more people are enjoying democracy and participatory governance than at any other time in human history; that is one of the means to fortify the culture of peace. A number of global conferences have reaffirmed understanding, tolerance and solidarity as the cornerstones of justice and peace. The Millennium Declaration also reiterated those principles. The revolution in information and communications has extended human capacity to an unprecedented extent in a globalizing world. We have the most sophisticated and diverse means of communication; the irony is that people are not communicating in a manner that would promote understanding.

These are developments that could certainly be instrumental in promoting international peace and security. There is a way; what we lack is the will to walk along a path that has so far been uncharted. My delegation greatly appreciates the role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its leadership in taking the welcome initiative on a culture of peace. We need to make the culture of peace a system-wide endeavour within the United Nations and a goal pursued individually and collectively by its Member States. There are a number of steps that we need to take to create a favourable environment in order to enable the culture of peace to succeed. They include, among other requirements, complete nuclear disarmament, control of small arms and light weapons, measures to build confidence between peoples and States and a declining reliance on arms and force as a means to resolve conflict. By discouraging the production, sale and deployment of arms we may hurt a few weapons systems researchers, some arms producers and some arms suppliers. But it would be a price worth paying for the greater cause of saving millions of lives, which are more precious than anything else, and of fostering enlightened societies, which represent the pinnacle that every human civilization seeks to reach.

In many societies that were traditionally paragons of peace, the moths of conflict have begun to eat away at the fabric of peace. The reasons are easy to understand. As the population continues to grow in poor countries faced with economic stagnation, more and more people are pushed into the abyss of poverty. Unscrupulous political elements, which cannot win the hearts and the confidence of people in democratic electoral processes, begin to entice innocent people, fobbing them off with utopian promises and exploiting their frustration in order to foment trouble. Parochialism comes to their help from outside, too.

As we have witnessed, in the majority of cases, such myopic forces succeed in making a dent only in those areas where people are poor and the fruits of development have yet to bring them out of impoverishment and backwardness.

The elements that have been identified as the key components of the culture of peace are the same ones that we have been separately and collectively trying to observe and promote. The notion of the culture of peace simply brings them together into a coherent whole. I, for one, fail to understand how some of us could have reservations about pursuing this course towards peace unless they are motivated by commercial interest or national hubris.

There may, of course, be a conflict between limited national interests and wider global obligations. To work for shared peace and prosperity, we need to endeavour to bridge the gulf between national and global interests. That is the kingpin of the United Nations Charter and multilateralism, which are in keeping with the fundamental goals of the culture of peace.

Common humanity is the main strand that binds the different elements embraced in the United Nations Charter and reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration. Perhaps that was the only reason why the founding fathers of the United Nations granted certain privileges and entrusted special responsibilities to some for promoting world peace and security. Nepal hopes that narrow national interests will not undermine the larger global interests that benefit the peoples of the world, in whose name the Charter is written.

We have tried a number of doctrines and weapon systems in the quest to secure a lasting peace, but we have failed. It is time for a culture of peace to receive unequivocal support from the global community. At stake are durable peace and progress, which fuel each other and offer freedom from fear and want, not just for a few but for all of humanity.

The Acting President: In accordance with the decision taken earlier, I now call on the Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): The century that has just ended will be remembered not only as a century of great scientific progress, but also as a one of extraordinary violence. It was a century in which millions of people fell victim to two great wars and to innumerable other horrendous wars and internal conflicts — a century that witnessed the Holocaust and repeated genocide, concentration and extermination camps, and hatred and ethnic cleansing.

But the century which is beginning could yet become one of peace. That must be the hope of this Organization, of the community of nations and of all humanity. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have together proclaimed the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. All must work to make this aspiration a reality.

The family of nations must work to this end precisely for the good of all the children of today's world, many of whom have known nothing but war. We must make it a reality in order to give those children, and all the children of the new century, new hope and a new future. In reality, it is the children of the world who will make the choice for peace. This generation must put them in a position to do so, through the creation of a true culture of peace.

The first requirement of a culture of peace is to reaffirm the conviction that war is no longer the way to resolve conflicts between nations or peoples. Pope John Paul II has repeated on many occasions the appeal made by his predecessor Pope Paul VI here in this General Assembly Hall: "Never again war". In his Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, the Pope appealed:

> "Never again war, which destroys the life of innocent people, teaches how to kill, throws into upheaval even the lives of those who do the killing and leaves behind a trail of resentment and hatred, thus making it all the more difficult to find a just solution to the very problems which provoked the war".

A culture of peace must be a culture of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the fruit of reflection on the destruction that is the result of war. It is the fruit of reflection on what happens when the fundamental dignity of the human person is overlooked and trampled upon. The recognition of the inalienable rights and dignity of each person represents the foundation of every authentically free political order.

A culture of peace must be based on truth and justice. Totalitarian regimes compel entire societies to submit, at least outwardly, to a vision of society that is imposed on them. The result was oppression and alienation. A culture of peace focused on the dignity of each person and on the truth about the human person must overturn such a vision. It must respect the conscience of each individual, which is bound only to the truth. It must foster the search for truth. It must respect those who are prepared, even in the face of great pressure and violence, to bear witness to the truth, especially when this is done in a spirit of peace.

The search for the truth about humankind and the human family must rise above purely utilitarian values and be open to the full truth about the human person

and the fundamental needs of people, who cannot be treated as mere commodities. It must overcome the desire for greed and the search for political and economic power, which today still remain at the root of many conflicts. Peace between nations presupposes justice and equity in the distribution of the goods of creation.

A culture of peace must be one which respects the rights of nations. Very often at the root of conflicts we find real and grave grievances based on deep injustices suffered or on the frustration of the legitimate aspirations of peoples. A way must be found to establish a rule of law in international life, just as it has been possible to do so within individual States. Every effort must be made to ensure that timely arbitration and a path of dialogue are available in areas of conflict and that the hand of friendship can be offered to overcome even deeply rooted conflicts. Conflict prevention must be fostered. Prevention and dialogue is the only way to lasting peace, even though the process may involve painstaking dialogue and the difficult search for solutions which respect the rights of peoples.

A culture of peace will reject the logic of the free flow of arms. The upcoming United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects offers a fresh opportunity to address a long-overlooked dimension of international disarmament. The current stock of small arms and the facility with which they can reach areas of conflict pose an enormous challenge to the community of nations. Such movement of arms greatly increases the possibility of open conflict and widespread loss of life. Concerted efforts must be made at the end of conflicts to collect and destroy weapons. Efforts must be made to strengthen regional security by fixing mutually agreed ceilings on arms expenditures in order to reduce the likelihood of the resumption of conflict.

In addressing budgetary distortions, the poverty reduction strategies currently being negotiated within the context of debt-relief initiatives must also address the issue of excessive military expenditures by already disastrously poor countries. The wealthier nations must be more rigorous in designing and implementing norms which prevent the flow of arms they produce into conflict zones.

A culture of peace will focus on the young, and especially on children. Children are today all too often the first victims of war. Their future is threatened by the breakdown of the normal social order, which prevents them from attending school or obtaining adequate health care. The fundamental protection which international humanitarian law affords to civilian populations must be respected, especially in the case of children. The plague of child soldiers must be removed from our world. How many young lives have been ruined by the forced involvement and abduction of children, which robs them of their innocence and brings them into face-to-face contact with violence, and even makes them the protagonists of violence and killing? Those responsible for the involvement of children in war merit the strongest condemnation by the community of nations.

A culture of peace must begin in human hearts. Violence must be put aside in every aspect of human life. Substituting a culture of non-violence for a culture of war does not happen automatically. This requires a true change of heart. This change must begin in the home and in the family. It must be founded on the true respect of each and every person and of each and every community. A culture of dialogue and respect between communities and civilizations must be fostered.

The world needs men and women who work for reconciliation rather than for war. It needs men and women of vision who can testify to the strength of non-violence, which has a more lasting effect than the bitterness that war inevitably engenders. Religious leaders especially must appeal to the deepest roots of their message, which stresses the fundamental brotherhood of all peoples, and they must rise above all attempts to exploit religious messages or religious sentiment for political or narrow ethnic motives.

The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has announced that Catholics will celebrate the World Day of Peace on 1 January 2001 under the theme: "Dialogue between cultures, for a civilization of love and peace". May that become a programme for everyone, for the sake of the children of this new century.

May I conclude by citing the words of Pope John Paul II, in his address to this Assembly on the occasion of the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary:

> "With the help of God's grace, we can build in the next century and the next millennium a civilization worthy of the human person, a true culture of freedom. We can and must do so. And

in doing so we shall see that the tears of this century have prepared the ground for a new springtime of the human spirit." (*A/50/PV.20, p. 6*)

May the words His Holiness pronounced five years ago translate today into hope for a true culture of peace.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item, and one representative has requested to exercise the right of reply.

May I remind Members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): The representative of Egypt has unfortunately used this debate on the culture of peace to voice a political attack against my country. His words ring particularly hollow on this day. It is with great sorrow that I must inform the Assembly of a most tragic terrorist attack that occurred today in our capital, Jerusalem. At approximately 3 p.m. local time, a car bomb exploded near the crowded Mahane Yehuda market in the heart of the city. Two people are confirmed dead, and several others have been injured.

This attack comes after repeated warnings by my Government that the release of close to one hundred Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists by the Palestinian Authority — terrorists convicted of barbarous murders — would be interpreted by these groups as a green light to commence attacks against Israeli civilians. These warnings went unheeded by the Palestinian leadership, and today we have witnessed the tragic results. The Palestinian Authority bears a heavy responsibility for this attack, and Israel has demanded that these terrorists be put back behind bars where they belong.

The timing of this attack is particularly unfortunate in light of the agreement reached early this morning between Minister of Regional Cooperation Shimon Peres and Chairman Yasser Arafat. The agreement includes the following: an undertaking to renew Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation at the level maintained prior to the outbreak of the Palestinian violence and a return of security forces to the previous deployment; the holding of coordination meetings between Israeli commanders and their Palestinian counterparts; the issuing of statements by both Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat to their respective media outlets, calling for a halt to the violence and incitement; and reviewing the implementation of this agreement in two days' time, with an eye towards issuing a joint Israeli-Palestinian call to United States President Clinton to convene the fact-finding committee agreed upon at Sharm el-Sheikh. This agreement, unfortunately, now hangs in the balance.

The comments of the Egyptian representative would have been less offensive if this morning's circumstances had not been so tragic. Only a fortnight ago, Egypt graciously hosted the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, at which an Israeli-Palestinian agreement was reached on ending the violence. That summit recognized that neither side in this conflict has the monopoly on the status of victim and that both sides must act to bring an end to the violence. Indeed, President Mubarak of Egypt spoke at the summit of the need for both sides to return to the peace process, to end the cycle of violence and to return to a culture of peace. In this light, the words of the representative of Egypt, which seek to portray Israel and Israelis as villains in this context, and his use of this forum to level unfounded charges and make baseless references to accusations of war crimes seem, at the very least, contradictory to Egypt's pronounced and greatly appreciated role as a supporter and facilitator of the Middle East peace process. Such political manipulation of the language of law only cheapens the law and in so doing undermines the prospects for a just peace.

Since the representative of Egypt has already chosen to refer to the issue of peace in our region, we would have expected him to use his statement today to encourage the Palestinian leadership to respond in kind to the hand of peace that Israel extended towards them at Camp David, rather than to reject outright Israel's compromise proposals and to choose instead to resort to armed struggle.

Although his words today are unfortunate, we continue in our hope that forces of moderation and coexistence — which we know exist in the Arab world — will be given a voice in international forums, thus promoting the metamorphosis of our war-torn region into a cooperative endeavour to truly enhance the culture of peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Roushdy (Egypt) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I will begin by expressing my total rejection of the

accusations levelled at my delegation that our statement was aggressive and offensive. We were the first to extend a hand of peace in the Middle East more than 20 years ago. Ever since then, Egypt has devoted all its efforts and diplomatic potential in all international forums to reinforce the peace process. But what kind of peace are we talking about? The culture of peace will never exist, nor will it be maintained if it is not embodied in a just peace that meets the demands and interests of all the parties — not extreme demands and needs, but just and equitable ones.

Allow me to add another fact. The Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War applies to the Palestinian occupied territories. It was agreed to by the international community, and there are no ifs, ands and buts about it. We are witnessing acts of violence. These acts undermine peace; violence breeds violence. This is evident and obvious. If we really want peace or want to promote the culture of peace, we have to identify for the party that caused the provocations and the circumstances that took the region out of the state of peace and threw it back into disturbances and confrontations.

The Acting President: I would like to inform Members that a draft resolution on this item will be submitted at a later date.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.